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# Educational Legislation in a Polarized Climate: A Look into Mississippi Education Politics

Benjamin C. Logan

*University of Mississippi. Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College*

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# Educational Legislation in a Polarized Political Climate

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A Look into Mississippi Education Politics

Ben Logan

5/4/2017

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X

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the political process related to educational legislation and initiatives. To accomplish this purpose, I conducted four interviews with educational experts who either have been active participants in the educational legislative process or been life-long educators. From these interviews, I organized their responses into four categories. These categories were Educational Issues in Mississippi, Passing Educational Legislation in Mississippi, Polarization of Politics, and Media Influence. With these categories, I did extensive research to bring in outside literature and documents to analyze the political process related to education legislation. In my qualitative study, I found Mississippi has historically been ranked near the bottom in education. Because of this ranking, many have ideas of how to implement positive change for Mississippi's educational system such as privatization of schools and increased teacher training

. Historically, Mississippi has been able to pass prominent educational legislation, such as the Education Reform Act of 1982 and Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP). These significant educational legislations were passed through the use of thorough legislative strategies. However, in recent history passing educational legislation has become far more difficult. Polarized politics have taken over the country and the state of Mississippi. New forms of media have left the electorate either misinformed or uninformed. Also, partisan media has created an electorate which "favors ideology rather than truth (Koppel)." Hence, these sound legislative strategies formerly used by

advocates of public education to enact legislation has been co-opted by polarized politics and perpetuated by new means of propagandizing the electorate. Nonetheless, these ideas of how to implement positive change are never enacted, and the problems with Mississippi's education system remain.

## **INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW OF STUDY AND THESIS**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the political process related to educational legislation and initiatives. To learn more about the impact of the political process on educational legislation, I reviewed several primary sources, I analyzed legal and news documents, examined scholarly literature from the fields of education and politics, and conducted personal interviews with educational expert informants.

Because my research involved interviewing human subjects, I had to receive approval from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Mississippi. I participated in educational training, applied, and received IRB approval in the summer of 2016. I have attached my interview questions, letter requesting an interview and information sheet in an appendix. All of these documents were approved by IRB of University of Mississippi. Following IRB approval, I began conducting interviews with participants in the summer of 2016.

I interviewed each subject about the political process surrounding educational legislation and policy. I utilized semi-structured questions that provided not only consistency across interviews, but also allowed flexibility to probe for deeper answers when appropriate. The duration of each interview was approximately 60 minutes. The questions covered three categories. The three categories of questions were: 1) subject's personal experiences in the legislative process, 2) subject's perspectives on the legislative process, and 3) subject's opinions about transparency and conflict in the legislative process.

This thesis starts with a biography of each interviewee. The interviewees are as follows: Dr. Andy Mullins, Dr. Cecil Weeks, Dr. Melody Musgrove, and Dr. Tom Burnham. All four of these individuals have been life-long educators and directly involved as participant observers in the legislative process during a significant portion of their careers. These four individuals bring a wealth of knowledge of local, state, and national views of educational policy and political polarization. Next I synthesize the interviews into four main categories or strands: current educational issues in Mississippi, passing education legislation, polarization of politics, and the impact of the media. Each strand contains excerpts from interviews and aims to flow like natural conversation between the four individuals. These four sections will also include analysis of the category's topic. A conclusion section will summarize my observations on the categorical strands. The final section will be an annotated bibliography which encompasses the primary sources used in my research of the four categories, Mississippi's Education Reform Act of 1982, the Mississippi Adequate Education Program, and the 2015 constitutional Initiative 42, among other relevant sources discussed in the narrative.



## **MOTIVATION**

My motivation for this thesis first centered on the effort to pass Mississippi's 2015 voter- initiated, constitutional amendment known as Initiative 42. This initiative proposed the full funding of a previous enactment of the Mississippi Legislature, the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP). On paper, MAEP provided state-wide funding to equalize local school district funding disparities. In reality, the Mississippi legislature historically has been reluctant to spend large sums of money and fully fund education. The political wrangling to prevent the passage of this historic amendment caused me to take a closer look at the issues surrounding Initiative 42.

To delve deeper, I read numerous opinion editorials, newspaper articles, and blog posts of people discussing Initiative 42. My inquiry about the discussions of Initiative 42 revealed bitter strife between two opposing sides; those who supported the passing of Initiative 42 and those who supported the failure of Initiative 42. The discussion was polarized. For example, Bill Crawford of Mississippi Business Journal called Initiative 42 "a wolf in sheep's clothing" saying this law would cause a slippery slope for loss of control of our Mississippi schools. However, Lynn Evans, a former Jackson School Board Member and contributing columnist, cited the Initiative as crucial for the economic future of Mississippi arguing that funding of "education and economic development go hand in hand." Numerous other examples of the same embattled rhetoric could be cited.

This strong polarization over the one issue of funding schools intrigued me. I kept asking where the middle ground was. Why was it that one was either for it or against it?

These questions prompted me to research the history of education legislation in Mississippi and the political processes which led to the passage of this legislation and subsequent policy. The focus of my research soon revealed that the politics had dramatically changed in passing legislation to improve public education.

As a future educator, I believe that the legislative and policy-making process is important for me to understand and thereby justifies this thesis project. Teachers are on the front lines of education, and usually teachers are the first ones who feel the effects of new educational policies passed down by legislatures. I believe it is important to understand how these policies are initiated, debated, passed (or defeated) and implemented. I propose that my study will give educators a better understanding of the political process and lead to increased confidence and voice in the political process. The voices of professional educators need to be heard and included in the political process. So many teachers have great ideas about how to help education, but have very little knowledge of the process to turn ideas into real policies. I believe teachers should be consulted and informed of legislation that could directly affect their profession. In conclusion, I look to bridge the gap between education and the politics of education in order to have a more informed profession of teaching.

## **SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS**

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act has long required that all children be provided a free and adequate education, but Mississippi continues to notoriously rank near the bottom of education metrics (*Quality Counts*). Current ideas about improving Mississippi's education problem range from fully funding an equalization formula between the school districts to increased privatization of the governmental function of educating children through the use of voucher programs and charter schools (Mullins). Current educational leaders advocate improvement of the existing public education system by changing institutional cultures and improving teacher quality. To their credit, past Mississippi leaders have successfully advocated and enacted landmark educational legislation to address these concerns, yet this progressive legislation has failed to be implemented (Dreher and Khayyam). The conventional political process of addressing educational issues is no longer working, and the cause of this breakdown in process must be identified before it can be remedied.

Through my interviews, I was afforded the great opportunity to talk to experts in the field of education. Speaking to educators and active participant observers of the legislative process provided the necessary insight into the educational and political process. These educational experts provided genuine and live qualitative data, which document research alone cannot provide.

## **LIMITATIONS**

I feel one potential limitation of my qualitative study was the lack of audio recording my four interviews with the educational experts. Instead I relied on my notes and recollection. Because I did not audio record the interviews, I possibly could have missed an important topic or quote that might have been said. Another possibility of not audio recording could have led me to focus on one part of a quote rather than the entirety of the quote. I realize I could have had a more accurate record of interviews with audio recorded interviews.

However, I believe I made the right decision in not recording my interviews. I felt having “off the record” interviews allowed people to be transparent and honest about their opinions. A lot of topics we discussed are hard fought issues and are sometimes difficult to talk about. Thus, I feel these interviewees were more open to what I had to ask with their interviews not being recorded.

## **DELIMITATIONS**

In this section, I want to address the choice of my interviewees. Primarily my interviewees were educators and strong supporters of education. I purposely picked these four interviewees because they were educators that took an active role. I wanted to interview real-life examples of educators taking active roles in education policy and legislation. Because I am becoming an educator, I wanted to know and talk with the interviewees about their lifetime commitments to education. Also these four interviewees possessed a lot of knowledge and experience with Mississippi educational issues. Thus, I feel these four interviewees provided the information I was seeking to help me think about how teachers make sense of and contribute to educational policy.

## **BIOGRAPHIES OF INTERVIEWEES**

### **Dr. Andrew Mullins**

Dr. Andrew Mullins originally from Macon, Mississippi, has been a lifelong supporter and advocate for public education. Mullins graduated from Millsaps College in 1970 and began teaching history at St. Andrew's Episcopal School shortly after graduation. While teaching at St. Andrew's Episcopal School, Mullins developed a relationship with William Winter. Mullins joined Governor William Winter's staff in 1980 as a part of the "boys of spring." Mullins played a pivotal part or role in passing the Education Reform Act of 1982. Mullins went on to serve as a liaison to the State Board of Education in 1984. Mullins also served as a special assistant to three consecutive state superintendents starting in 1985. Mullins also helped to co-found the Mississippi Teacher Corps in 1989, a program that trains and places teachers in high needs areas across Mississippi. Mullins became Dr. Mullins in 1992, graduating from University of Mississippi and published his book *Building Consensus: A History of the Passage of the Mississippi Education Reform Act of 1982*. Since 1994, Mullins joined the University of Mississippi serving in a variety of roles including Special Assistant to the Chancellor and Chief of Staff to the Chancellor. Through these roles, Mullins maintained an active role in promoting public education by working with government relations on the local, state and federal levels. Today, Mullins works primarily with fostering the success of the Mississippi Teacher Corps and remains a strong supporter of public education.

Information for Dr. Mullin's biography was primarily collected from personal interviews and:

[http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/general\\_library/archives/finding\\_aids/MUM00736.html](http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/general_library/archives/finding_aids/MUM00736.html)

### **Dr. Cecil Weeks**

Dr. Cecil Weeks has been a lifetime educator and proponent of public education. Dr. Weeks began teaching in January of 1960 at Shannon Junior High School. From 1961 to 1987, Weeks worked in the Tupelo Public School District as a teacher and administrator. In 1987, Weeks was elected as Lee County Superintendent. Weeks acted as the Lee County Superintendent until 1995, when he "believed" he had retired. In 1996 one year after "retirement," Weeks began working with the North Mississippi Education Consortium. The North Mississippi Education Consortium is a partnership among north Mississippi public school districts, community colleges, and the University of Mississippi School of Education. The purpose of this consortium is to foster collaboration among schools and colleges, while also helping to provide quality education programs for students and local communities. Weeks still works with the North Mississippi Education Consortium, where he is the co-director. Weeks enjoys this role as it allows him to constantly work on creating a better education environment for all students in North Mississippi.

Information for this biography was primarily collected from personal interviews and

<http://djournal.com/news/no-longer-a-superintendent-weeks-remains-in-education/>  
<http://www.northmsec.com/about/>

## **Dr. Melody Musgrove**

Dr. Melody Musgrove has had held many hats in the realm of education.

Musgrove has served as a classroom teacher, school administrator, district special education director, and assistant superintendent across the state of Mississippi. Musgrove also served as the State Director of Special Education for Mississippi Department of Education from 2001 to 2007. During her tenure as Director of Special of Education, Musgrove worked on many projects and bills; however, she played a crucial role in settling and rewriting the Mattie T. Decree, which focused on reforming special education in Mississippi. After her tenure as State Director of Special Education, Musgrove worked as Director of Business Development for LRP Publications. LRP Publications acts as the leading publisher for “legal and regulatory guidance for educators (US DOE).” In 2010, Musgrove was appointed by the White House to be Director of the Office of Special Education Programs for the U.S. Department of Education. Serving as Director of the Office of Special Education Programs helped to reform accountability standards for special education for the first time in 40 years. Dr. Musgrove stepped down as a Director of the Office of Special Education Programs in January 2016. Later that year Musgrove joined the Graduate Center for Study of Early Learning at the University of Mississippi School of Education. In this role, Musgrove teaches undergraduate and graduate classes, provides professional development for early childhood educators, conducts research on early childhood education, and advocates for early childhood education statewide.

Information for this biography was primarily collected from personal interviews and:



<https://news.olemiss.edu/melody-musgrove-joins-graduate-center-study-early-learning/>

<http://conference.tash.org/speakers/melody-musgrove/>

### **Dr. Tom Burnham**

Dr. Tom Burnham has been a veteran educator for the past 48 years. Burnham served as a classroom teacher, coach, and principal. Burnham also served as Superintendent of Biloxi schools and Henderson County, North Carolina Public Schools. From 1992 to 1997, Burnham served as Mississippi Superintendent of Education where he helped pass the Mississippi Adequate Education Program formula and provided health insurance for teachers. In 2004, Burnham joined the University of Mississippi as the Dean of the School of Education, where he served until 2009. In 2009, Burnham was recalled to the office of Mississippi Superintendent of Education. In his second stint as Mississippi Superintendent of Education, Burnham was responsible for improving student achievement and raising standards across the state. In 2012, Burnham retired from his position as Mississippi Superintendent of Education and began working with the University of Mississippi's Principal Corps. Since 2012, Burnham has served as director of the Principal Corps, which is a 13-month cohort-based graduate program designed to turn successful classroom teachers into effective administrators. Today, Burnham still serves as director of the Principal Corps where he believes he is developing future leaders to better the education of Mississippi K-12 students.

Information for this biography was primarily collected from personal interviews and:

[http://djournal.com/news/Mississippi-state-k-12-superintendent-tom-burnham-to-  
retire/](http://djournal.com/news/Mississippi-state-k-12-superintendent-tom-burnham-to-<br/>retire/)

[http://www.mc.edu/news/mc-graduate-tom-burnham-named-Mississippi-  
superintendent-of-educ/](http://www.mc.edu/news/mc-graduate-tom-burnham-named-Mississippi-<br/>superintendent-of-educ/)

<https://news.olemiss.edu/superintendent-education-tom-burnham-returns-um/>

## EDUCATIONAL ISSUES IN MISSISSIPPI

Throughout my interviews, a few topics surrounding education in the state of Mississippi arose. These topics included concerns about privatization, teacher preparation, and school culture, to name a few. I wanted to ascertain from my interview subjects their perspectives on these topics. A collection of these subjects' opinions which demonstrates their knowledge of current educational issues in Mississippi follows.

Mississippi notoriously ranks near the bottom of education metrics. *Education Weekly's* annual report entitled *Quality Counts* tracks such measurements as K-12 achievement, chance for success, and school finance. The report grades and ranks each state based on these education indicators. The 2016 *Quality Counts* report gave the state of Mississippi a grade of D overall and a ranking of 50th overall. For much of the state's history, Mississippi has held similar rankings; however, each of my interviewees believes the public education system remains vital for our state and its people.

Dr. Cecil Weeks spoke of the importance of teaching everyone in public schools. Weeks underscored the democratic or egalitarian appeal of public education when he explained, "The creation of (public) schools promised that it would educate everyone. This means you educate the masses rather than a few." He further illustrated the mission of public educators by comparing the teaching profession to a ministerial calling by emphasizing the importance of teaching students of all backgrounds. He continued, "The preachers and others talk about giving a full time Christian service throughout your

life. Even though I am not a preacher, I am in a full time service where I am mandated to teach everyone regardless of socioeconomic background, home life, smart, dumb, or disability. It is good for us all”

Dr. Andy Mullins believes public education is very important for the state, and it is important that it does not become privatized. Mullins expressed his concern, “Roughly 90% of the school-age children are in public schools, so you have to educate them. I do not believe in for-profit schools, but for some reason, more and more people are calling for privatization of schools. I do not understand it.”

Mullins’s concerns can be validated by making a comparison to Mississippi’s recent attempts to privatize prisons. Jill Filipovic of *The Guardian* called the move for privatized prisons “a national disgrace” for the State of Mississippi. Mississippi began the experiment of allowing prisons to be operated by for-profit contractors in the late 1990s. Since inception, these privately-run prisons have come under strict scrutiny (Filipovic). Recent incidents have led to bad publicity and harsh accusations have arisen against private prisons. For example, Emily Le Coz of *The Huffington Post* wrote of “barbaric conditions” in a privatized prison near Meridian called the East Mississippi Correctional Facility. She wrote, “The inmates...lived in filthy quarters without working lights or toilets, forcing them to defecate on Styrofoam trays or into trash bags, the American Civil Liberties Union and the Southern Poverty Law Center claimed in the lawsuit (Huffington Post).” The prison was designed to aid the treatment and rehabilitation of the mentally ill and substance abuse-related offenders. Instead the privately run prison has been categorized as a horrific, abysmal failure for some of our most vulnerable members of

society. Mississippi has not closed the facility; instead the state fired the prison contractor and hired another contractor. Allegations of abuse and neglect still exist.

Unfortunately, the East Mississippi facility is not the only example of a failure of privatization. Mississippi recently closed the Jones County Walnut Grove Youth Correctional Facility in September 2016. A federal judge concluded the prison was “effectively run by gangs in collusion with corrupt prison guards (Williams).” The United States Department of Justice conducted an investigative report in 2012. The findings of the US Department of Justice concluded, “The sexual misconduct we found was among the worst that we have seen in any facility anywhere in the nation... [Also] the staff often uses excessive force as a first response, not as a last resort, including the use of pepper spray in excessive amounts (US Department of Justice).” Thus, these two facilities exemplify the state’s failure in successfully shifting governmental responsibilities to a private sector operation. Privatization failed the inmates who represented perhaps the most vulnerable members of society—the mentally ill, addicts and young people. The question Mississippians have to ask is can we run this risk with “our most valuable resource,” our children and future.

Although these are striking examples of failures in privatizing a governmental function, many proponents of privatizing education offer as a success story the Knowledge is Power Program Delta College Preparatory School, or KIPP DCPS, in Helena, Arkansas. Many believe this is a beacon of hope for privatizing education. These schools show how high percentages of students on free and reduced lunch attain high levels of achievement. Critics state selective recruitment of students with a prior history of higher academic ability as a reason why KIPP schools are successful. Additionally,

critics also cite possible high numbers of student attrition that provides KIPP advantage as well. A study conducted by professors at the University of Arkansas aimed to explore these criticisms. The authors intended to “rigorously compare performance of KIPP students with traditional public school peers on matched observable academic and demographic variables and carefully consider student attrition rates at KIPP (Rose, Maranto, and Ritter).” The study showed KIPP schools were successful in Arkansas and proved the critics wrong. This study concluded, “KIPP attendance is associated with improved achievement...Furthermore, KIPP campus level attrition seems no higher than for nearby traditional public schools (Rose, Maranto, Ritter).” KIPP-like programs provide some support to the argument that privatization can have a positive impact on our educational system.

With stories attesting to both good and bad results in the privatization of governmental functions, Mullins still does not believe privatization provides the answer for education. Instead, Mullins believes well trained teachers and principals are key to helping Mississippi schools. “We need well-trained empathetic teachers and well-trained principals, but we have to incentivize this and pay more. Because public schools have to take everyone, public schools sometimes become a “dumping ground” for educating hard students, thus we need to recruit better teachers with higher pay.”

The country of Finland validates Mullins opinion that successful education starts with well-trained teachers. Historically, Finland has been ranked at the top of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) performance rankings since the rankings began in 2001. Finland views the teaching profession as a “highly prized profession” (Crouch). To become a teacher in Finland, a student has to go through a strict

competition to garner one of the prized “five year master’s degree for primary school teachers.” Helsinki University, a prestigious educational school, only accepts 7% of its applicants. Thus, 1,400 students who desire to be teachers are turned away each year from Helsinki University. All teachers are required to have a master’s degree. This requires all teachers to do some research and engage with teaching practices with sound evidence: “Not only is teacher education in Finland strongly research-based, but all the students on the primary school master’s course are engaged in research themselves – a point of pride for Patrik Scheinin, dean of the faculty. The course aims to produce “didacticians” who can connect teaching interventions with sound evidence (Crouch). Henceforth, Finland has come to value the profession of teaching and requires teachers to be well trained. This investment in well-trained teachers has resulted in increased educational success in Finland.

Dr. Melody Musgrove agrees with Mullins that the state of Mississippi fails to put enough money into education. Musgrove stated, “Education is the responsibility of the state. And, we have to stop treating education as a cost and realize it is an investment. In order to create good for all, we must invest in education and jobs. Education is vital and we cannot see it as an expense.”

The impact of education funding cannot be analyzed without a discussion of the recent Mississippi voter initiative brought to a vote in the fall of November, 2015. Initiative 42 was a citizen-led effort to amend the Constitution of Mississippi to give each child the right to an adequate public education through fully funding education in the State of Mississippi. The amendment called for the legislature to fully fund education by fully funding the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP). The bipartisan,

1997 MAEP, established an education funding formula aimed to “ensure that every Mississippi Child regardless of where he/she lives is afforded an adequate educational opportunity, as defined by the State Accountability System” (Mississippi Department of Education). However, since 1997 the Mississippi Legislature has only fully-funded MAEP twice. Overall, the Mississippi Legislature has underfunded MAEP by \$1.7 billion. Initiative 42 aimed to stop the underfunding of education in Mississippi. However, Initiative 42 was defeated by a slim margin of about 4% or 20,000 votes.

The campaign for Initiative 42 was similar to the Education Reform Act of 1982. An architect of that earlier program, Mullins pointed out a few differences which led to the failure of passing Initiative 42 and the goals of MAEP. “In 1982, we had a governor who was willing to sacrifice a future political race for education and raising taxes. This time there was no leadership that supported the initiative. Also this time there was a supermajority of politicians who were mean spirited and would not allow opposition to be voiced. In a democracy, you need an indispensable opposition that is openly heard.”

Mullins and Dr. Tom Burnham both believed the primary reason the Initiative failed was the introduction of Initiative 42-A. Initiative 42-A was an alternative initiative introduced by the “supermajority” legislature which left the power of funding schools in “the hands of the voters with the legislators” (Callen). Mullins and Burnham both stated that the introduction of this alternative created a confusing ballot and an almost impossible route to passage. Other observers of the campaign for Initiative 42 agreed. Luther Munford, an attorney from Jackson who was a sponsor of Initiative 42, called the introduction of 42-A “a strategy of deception” (Munford). Arielle Dreher of the *Jackson Free Press* agreed that 42-A ultimately led to the demise of Initiative 42. “As soon as the



Mississippi Legislature proposed an alternative measure to Initiative 42...its advocates cried foul, saying the alternate was only there to confuse voters. But the alternative-initiative gambit worked whether it was a meaningful amendment or just a legislative trip-up for voters (Dreher).”

Burnham believes Mississippi should not only focus on fully funding education, but also should focus on the culture surrounding education. Ending his tenure as Mississippi Superintendent of Education, Burnham moved to North Carolina to become the superintendent of Henderson County Schools. He recalled how the community and surrounding area valued education at a very high level and perceived education differently than Mississippi. He discussed an example of how North Carolina valued its public education more than Mississippi had. Burnham recalled, “I went into a laundromat in North Carolina and a guy comes back from behind the counter to shake my hand and thank me for giving him business. But he then goes on to tell me that he also realized I was the superintendent of Henderson County Schools and really wanted to thank me for working with their schools. Another similar encounter happened at a restaurant in North Carolina. It amazed me. That is the only time where that has happened to me. You could really tell they cared and valued their educational system.” Thus, Burnham suggests Mississippi needs to create a culture where our citizens value education and support good principals and teachers through adequate funding. Mississippi must demand more.

This idea of building a positive school culture is a popular one in the realm of education. In 2013, Leslie Kaplan and William Owings wrote *Culture Re-boot, Reinventing School Culture to Improve School Outcomes*. In their book they described that changing and implementing a successful school culture is a complex but vital process

for the success of schools. The authors discussed the great ideas from the realm of education reform in the past forty years. However, few reform ideas have succeeded because of a lack of consideration of and change in school culture. The authors wrote, “Many reform efforts fail because they do not consider school culture or respect its capacity to derail even well-intentioned efforts. Until teachers and principals can recognize and modify those aspects of their school’s culture that inhibit positive change, all their good intentions and innovations will be no more than seasonal window dressing.” Thus, educational leaders must perform a cultural re-boot which provides new ideas and approaches to deliver better outcomes for students. This re-boot requires acknowledging the current culture, implementing leadership changes, building relationships among members of the community, developing collaboration, and creating a student-centered learning culture. The authors described this process as long but necessary for achieving successful school outcomes.

The law has long required that all children be provided a free and adequate education, but Mississippi continues to notoriously rank near the bottom of education metrics (*Quality Counts*). Given this almost universally accepted problem, where is the effort to solve it in the political process? Current solutions for improving this problem range from fully funding an equalization formula between the school districts to privatization of the governmental function of educating children. Initiative 42 and charter schools provide two drastically different ways to fund schools and operate them. Opposing Initiative 42 because of the possible loss of local control but advocating charter schools which turn over control to private companies is either logically inconsistent or disingenuous. The failure to implement common-sense, institutional policies like

recruiting better trained public teachers and changing cultures is equally puzzling. Has Mississippi addressed sweeping educational reforms in the past, and if so, are we simply not using past successful strategies of influencing the legislative process?

## **PASSING EDUCATIONAL LEGISLATION**

A number of my interviewees had personal experience helping pass educational legislation either on the state or national level. Throughout my interviews I asked about the specifics of how they were able to pass their respective educational legislation. I wanted to investigate what strategies they had used. My interviewees shared their experiences with passing legislation throughout their interviews.

In *The Logic of Congressional Action* R. Douglas Arnold, Politics professor at Princeton University, discussed how Congress works and legislation is passed. Throughout the book, Arnold provided explanations of how members of congress vote. A major chapter of the book was dedicated to strategies for coalition leaders to pass legislation. Arnold talked of persuasion, procedural, and modification strategies. Persuasion strategies included linking policies to established goals and policies. Arnold gave the example of a categorical shift such as tying a piece of legislation to national defense or economic growth. Another strategy for persuasion was an argument of equity. Arnold also suggested linking to issues with known public opinion on your side. Procedural strategies included changing the voting process to where votes may or may not be recorded depending on the legislation. Modification strategies included making benefits clearer, making costs less clear, buying off opponents, spreading the benefits, and putting incremental steps for the legislation. These strategies can be seen throughout the political process of passing legislation with any deliberative body on the local, state

or national level. Here I will discuss the practical uses of these strategies through the lens of my interviewees' experience with passing educational legislation.

Dr. Andrew Mullins served as an assistant on Governor William Winter's staff and was a part of the most comprehensive education reform act in Mississippi, the Education Reform Act of 1982. The reform was passed in a special session in December of 1982. The significant legislation provided mandatory kindergartens for every school district, compulsory attendance, a better school accreditation system, and raised \$110 million in new taxes for public education. Mullins attributed the passage of the historic bill to "consensus building." Mullins classifies this as the constant work of getting citizens of the state and legislators to support the legislation. Mullins and Winter's staff implemented Arnold's persuasion strategy of linking issues with known public opinion on their side. Winter and his staff knew Mississippians wanted better schools and aimed to fully educate them on the legislation to have it passed. This was accomplished through a long campaign that included regional meetings across the state to inform the public about the legislation.

Governor Winter's strong leadership was also vital for the passage of the act. Governor Winter's political maneuvering to call a special session also aided in the successful passage. This was a procedural strategy enacted by Governor Winter by utilizing the process of a special session. The Legislature could not come to a consensus in a regular session, thus Governor Winter changed the procedure and utilized a special session to have a fully dedicated session for the Education Reform Act.

The Education Reform Act also underwent many modifications throughout the process of passage. First, proponents had to find more money to fund all of the new

educational initiatives. In order to accomplish supporting this need, proponents made the benefits more clear and the costs less clear by implementing an increase in the state sales tax to be earmarked for education. This strategy would provide significant funds for educational benefits through a small percentage tax on products bought every day by Mississippians. Governor Winter implemented another modification strategy by spreading the benefits of the tax across the state for all schools. Through these persuasion, procedural, and modification strategies, the State of Mississippi passed the Education Reform Act of 1982.

Dr. Melody Musgrove worked with educational legislation at the state level and nationally. Musgrove served as the Superintendent of Special Education of Mississippi from 2001 to 2007. As Superintendent of Special Education, she worked on modifying and adhering to the Mattie T. Consent Decree. The Mattie T. Consent Decree resulted from a class action suit filed in U.S. District Court in 1975 on behalf of all disabled children in Mississippi. The decree focused on four major areas of child learning, least restrictive environment, disproportionality, and procedural safeguards. Mississippi had signed the decree in 1979 but had not fully adhered to the consent decree. Through Musgrove's tenure, her administration was responsible for modifying the consent decree and ultimately adhering to all of the specifics of the decree shortly after she left office. As a result of these efforts, the state reduced the over-identification of minorities in Special Education, increased the number of emotionally-disabled and other health impaired children receiving special education services, implemented a least restrictive environment for students and included more students in the general education classroom. Musgrove emphasized leadership support ensured the success of the revised decree. Musgrove also

believed the legislation to be the morally right thing to do. Musgrove wrote, “My job was to convince why this was right for all students. My main focus was we can teach these students and they can learn. We also pointed out a lot of data which showed what we were doing was not working.” In advocating for the right thing to do, Musgrove was implementing a persuasion tactic by trying to enhance equity among all students.

Musgrove also worked as the National Director of Special Education of the United States Department of Education. Under her tenure from 2010 to 2016, Musgrove helped change the accountability for special education for the first time in forty years. Her changes shifted to focusing more on outcomes of the students rather than just compliance indicators such as timelines for evaluations and due process hearings (US Department of Education). In changing the accountability metrics for special education, Musgrove said she faced a lot of negative feedback. She talked about the importance of data to convince opponents and allies. Musgrove stated, “We were met with a lot of naysayers. But we brought groups together such as Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and Council of Chief State School Officers. Also, internally we had some negativity and had to convince them this needed to happen. We were armed with a lot of data and had so much evidence that what we were doing was not working. Across the country there was consistent data which showed progress for special education students had remained flat for twenty years.” Altogether, Musgrove cited the three factors in being able to pass this accountability legislation: having easily understandable data, communication, and possessing internal support with the leadership of Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

As Dr. Musgrove experienced, easily understandable data is crucial in persuasion strategies of passing any type of legislation. Katherine Isaac, author of *Practicing Democracy*, also believes in the importance of data in passing legislation. In *Practicing Democracy* Isaac wrote, “Groups use reports and surveys to document evidence that a particular problem exists or is widespread and to offer the group's’ solutions for change. A report can alert government officials, the media, and the public to an issue and what can be done about it (Nader and Isaac 8).” Not only is it important to have the data, however it is important to get the data into a condensed and easily attainable version through the use of charts, graphs, or any other visuals. This process is called by some data visualization. Data journalist, David McCandless believes data visualization “has the power to turn complex data sets into beautiful, simple diagrams that tease out unseen patterns and connections (TedGlobal).” McCandless talks of how it is very easy to get lost in a lot of data, making it important to use data visualization as a road map to guide constituents. McCandless believes the data visualization allows for the observer to effortlessly gather the data and “let it pour in.” Data visualization can be vital for passing legislation because it presents data in an easily accessible way for members of deliberative bodies to understand the data and the purpose of the overall legislation.

Serving two stints as Superintendent of Education of Mississippi, Dr. Tom Burnham helped pass a number of educational policies. Prior to 1992, teachers in the State of Mississippi did not have health insurance. While working as superintendent at Biloxi, Mississippi, the district’s access to health insurance made an impression on Burnham. As Superintendent of Education for Mississippi, he made health insurance for educators one of his first projects. In describing the process of selling it to legislators,



Burnham stated, “Dr. Mullins and I went to the capital and campaigned for this. We sold it as an inducement for teachers to stay in teaching and get more people into teaching with the added benefits. We were fought by the state insurance program because they thought it was a risk. However, I argued these were primarily young, healthier people, and we were able to provide opportunity and health insurance to more people.” In the process of selling it to legislators, Burnham utilized a few of Arnold’s strategies. Burnham employed the persuasion strategy of categorical shift by saying the legislation would be a recruiting tool for teachers rather than a health cost. Burnham also used a modification strategy by addressing the state health program’s concerns by arguing that primarily healthy, young individuals would not use the insurance as much. Burnham made the benefits clearer and the costs more vague.

Burnham also helped pass the Mississippi Adequate Education Program. Burnham called this piece of legislation a bellwether opportunity to bring about equity in educational spending. Burnham remembered how bitter a fight it was to get this piece of legislation passed. “The legislation was well constructed. The passage of MAEP was partially why I retired the first time. It was not a political fight it was a struggle to get people to agree on what was right. Everybody thought we should do it, but each legislator in key positions wanted their local school to get their fair share. So you saw this battle between urban schools and rural schools.” Burnham credited the ultimate passage of the bill to data which demonstrated how big of a discrepancy existed between rural and urban schools. Burnham had to implement the persuasion strategy of focusing on equity between the schools. He showed this by describing how the local tax base for Desoto County could generate \$1.1 million from one mill (a measure of taxation), where a school

in one of the poorer Delta counties would only generate around \$40,000 from one tax mill. This approach also acted as a modification strategy because the benefits were spread all across the state with increased funding for all districts despite their location. Burnham did not have to use the modification strategies of buying off opponents or allowing for geographic benefits. The opponents eventually conceded and the historic funding bill was passed. Burnham also felt that having the support of state leaders for the legislation benefitted passage of the funding legislation.

Proponents of legislation of all sorts have used these strategies for a long time, and the strategies work. These strategies have worked in Mississippi on education-related legislation. What factors have now impacted our political climate or process to make these strategies unworkable so as to solve widely recognized problems?

## **POLARIZATION OF POLITICS**

Throughout my interviews, the topic of the polarization of politics consistently rose as a point of discussion. I wanted to investigate the evolution of the polarization of politics and its impact on creating education policy. Two possible conclusions arose from my inquiry. Has our politics evolved to a point of no return, that is, are we on the “cliff” of polarization? Or have we experienced a paradigm shift and must adapt new strategies for passing legislative measures in this new frontier of politics? My interviewees shed their opinions and knowledge on our current state of polarization in politics. Along with additional written sources, my observations follow.

Dr. Andrew Mullins, who has been involved in politics since 1980, said today’s politics embrace a no compromise stance among legislators. Instead, politicians and legislatures represent only their districts and political parties. Thus, legislatures seldom seek solutions for the whole body politic, claiming that is what is best for their constituents. Dr. Cecil Weeks stated that “we” is nowhere to be found, and that today’s polarization acts as a representation of a sociology problem. Weeks stated, “When faced with solving a problem, there are three possible outcomes, a lose-lose, a win-win, or a win-lose. Ideally, you would like for politics and policy to operate under the win-win mantra. However, today we are seeing more of a focus on win-lose outcomes rather than win-win.” What could account for this jettisoning of the idea of the win-win politics of the whole?

Musgrove believes the state's political climate demanding a lack of compromise as a mirror image of what we see nationally, and that we are taking politics too personally now. "Fifteen to twenty years ago, people would have debate over policy and then go eat afterwards. Now, you may have two good friends not even speak as they pass each other because of a difference of opinion over a policy." Dr. Tom Burnham has seen a similar evolution in his time in Mississippi politics. Serving as state superintendent of education in the late 1990s and a second term from 2009 to 2012, Burnham saw firsthand this transformation in politics. Burnham described how the emergence of strict party lines and polarization was not present in his first term as superintendent of education. "When I was there in the 1990s, legislators would get together and hammer it out, but in the end, would work together and get through it. But, now we see very little of that happening today."

Jonathan Rauch of *The Atlantic* also has noticed this lack of compromise and comradery in government today; however, Rauch blamed the lack of compromise and comradery in Congress and legislatures on the American people pushing for political and legislative reforms over the last 40 years. Rauch wrote in "How American Politics Went Insane" about how a gradual progression of reforms has caused the inefficiencies in the legislative process. Rauch believed an ineffective government exists because of the attack on the country's political "middlemen" or "state and national party committees, county party chairs, congressional sub-committees, leadership PAC's, convention delegates, bundlers, etc. (Rauch)." In sum, Rauch believed these "middlemen" brought order to a chaotic world because these middlemen "mediated between disorganized swarms of

politicians and disorganized swarm of voters, thereby performing the indispensable task of assembling power in the formal government (Rauch).”

These attacks on the middlemen came in the form of reforms. Rauch believed that reforming the processes that allowed for closed-door negotiations directly caused the loss of compromise in the government. Although these reforms brought more transparency, Rauch believed the ability to generate deep deliberations and compromise became obsolete. Rauch wrote, “One result is greater transparency, which is good. But another result is that finding space for delicate negotiations and candid deliberations can be difficult. Smoke-filled rooms, whatever their disadvantages, were good for brokering complex compromises in which nothing was settled until everything was settled; once gone, they turned out to be difficult to replace. In public, interest groups and grandstanding politicians can tear apart a compromise before it is halfway settled (Rauch).” Rauch was not the only one that believes more transparency has been a detriment to the ability of compromise and fostering difficult discussions. Former Democratic Senate majority leader Tom Daschle wrote about this phenomenon, “The lack of opportunities for honest dialogue and creative give-and-take lies at the root of today’s dysfunction (Rauch).” Rauch and Daschle both believed the lack of an institutional forum for tough deliberation and compromise ultimately created this non-compromising, ineffective government and legislatures of today.

Dr. Melody Musgrove said the rise of polarization and the lack of compromise began around the late 1990s. She stated near the turn of the century we saw trends of “they are the enemy,” and relationships began to unravel. Animosity grew across party lines and each party began to side along strict party lines. She attributes this shift in

politics to Newt Gingrich's combatant rhetoric throughout the 1990s. This rhetoric was ever present in Gingrich's *Contract for America*. Steven Gillon, the author of *The Pact*, described Gingrich's rhetoric in *Contract for America*. "[*The Contract of America*] combined a militant rhetorical style that attacked the moral underpinnings of the Democratic Party with a positive Republic ideological message..." Gingrich furthered this adversarial mentality by concluding the document stating, "[Republicans] 'must emphasize a wedge of issues that drive our opponents away from the American people, while having a secondary theme of magnet issues that attract the American people to us'" (Gillon). Musgrove believes Gingrich fostered the mentality of "us versus them" which became the driving force in the increasing polarization of politics.

Contrary to Musgrove, Gary C. Jacobson, professor of political science at the University of California at San Diego, believed this trend of polarization began much earlier. Jacobson believed Americans began to polarize and become more partisan around the presidency of Eisenhower. In the time of Eisenhower's presidency, the approval rating was around 75% with 94% Republicans approving Eisenhower and only 57% of Democrats approving Eisenhower. This left a partisan difference of approval of 37%. This partisan difference would continue to rise over the next fifty years.

Jacobson believed Watergate and Nixon caused the biggest shift in partisanship and polarization. Prior to Nixon's presidency, the partisan difference on approval ratings of the current president hovered around 37% to 46%. After Nixon's presidency, the partisan difference in approval ratings of the current president soared to 61%. From 1984 to 2004, this partisan difference continued to rise until it hit a 76% difference under George W. Bush's presidency. Thus, Jacobson believed the rise of polarization was a

gradual process over fifty years rather than the quick rise of divisive rhetoric of the late 1990s, a notion which Musgrove suggested.

Much like the United States, Mississippi had a gradual rise of polarization. In his interview, Burnham chronicled the transformation of Mississippi politics. Burnham believed Mississippi began to undergo a marked change under the governorship of Haley Barbour. “Haley Barbour was a master of politics. Barbour had been the National Committee Chairman of the Republican Party and knew what he was doing. He was the first governor to have the political finesse to put Republicans in line with the party. He implemented strict party lines and gave an almost ultimatum if they did not fall in line.” Although, Governor Barbour introduced the transformation of strict party lines in Mississippi, Burnham stated that he could always work with Barbour on issues.

Jere Nash, Andy Taggart, and John Grisham discussed this shift ushered in by Barbour in their book entitled *Mississippi Politics: The Struggle for Power, 1976-2008*. The authors wrote, “With Barbour in the Governor’s Mansion and with seventy-one Republicans in the legislature, a political dynamic emerged at the capitol that was unique in the state’s history— issues were debated from a Democratic perspective and a Republican perspective. Prior to the convening of the 2004 session, geography, race, and economic status influenced the votes legislators cast on public policy issues. The rules changed when Barbour took the oath of office. Political party began to matter (Nash, Taggart, and Grisham).” Haley Barbour was quoted saying that a partisan evolution did occur but he believed it was naturally occurring. Barbour stated, “We haven’t had a partisan revolution in Mississippi. We’ve had an evolution. In retrospect, it seems like a

natural progression, though it didn't feel like it along the way (Nash, Taggart, and Grisham)".

Along with Barbour's influence, Burnham also thought Mississippi became a mirror image of national politics and Washington D.C. Burnham saw the insertion of lobbyists into Mississippi politics around 2010. He recounted a committee meeting on an educational issue where approximately fifty community members were waiting to fill the room and the lobbyists were given priority sitting. By the 2011-2012 election, Dr. Burnham explained Mississippi had fully transformed into Washington D.C.-style politics and that lobbyists had a stronghold on policy and legislatures.

Along with the rise of lobbyists at the turn of the decade, Andy Mullins believes polarization of Mississippi politics was directly affected by the reapportionment of legislative districts. Every ten years, the legislature is in charge of apportioning Congressional seats and state representatives. Mullins explained that during this time of reapportionment, representatives will "gerrymander" or manipulate electoral boundaries of each district. The last reapportionment was done in 2010 at the height of polarization and lobbyists' influence according to Burnham. Mullins believes that this reapportionment fostered more polarization and allowed it to thrive. Mullins pointed out the defeat of only six incumbents in the last Congressional elections is representative of how gerrymandering greatly affects politics.

Mullins claim of gerrymandering districts in Mississippi is not an isolated phenomenon in the United States. Les Francis, former Executive Director of the Democratic National Committee believed the idea of gerrymandering has allowed for the rise of divisive politics. Les Francis stated, "The polarization and poisonous atmosphere



that have infected the House of Representatives for the past two decades or more can be traced -- in large part -- to the manner in which district lines are drawn in most states (Francis,).”

Yasmin A. Dawood of the University of Chicago wrote of how gerrymandering can transform state politics. Shortly after the release of the 2000 census results, the political leaders of the State of Pennsylvania gerrymandered districts to keep the Republican Party in power. Dawood believed this gerrymandering of districts was fundamentally undemocratic and weakened the option of electing new candidates. Dawood also discussed how Republican leaders created “safe seats” where incumbents were almost guaranteed re-election. As Mullins alluded to only six incumbents being defeated in the last Congressional election, the “safe seat” result of gerrymandering may well be present in Mississippi. Dawood highlighted the seriousness of partisan gerrymandering. “Partisan gerrymandering poses serious hazards to the health of a democratic system by stifling competition and pre-ordaining election results. Rather than having voters choose their representatives, a gerrymandered system allows representatives to choose their voters (Dawood 33).”

Regardless of when it began, partisan politics has fully matured to the point of gridlock in Washington, and with its solidification in Mississippi from 2004 until now, a similar result has been achieved. Issues are no longer viewed as different opinions on policy; national party identification, the accompanying lack of civility and cooperation and a win-lose mentality make these debates over even the simplest, non-partisan issues a futile struggle for the minority party. The gerrymandering of legislative districts sets and

preserves future discourse. In the past, the news media has helped inform the public when politics gets in such a state. Where has the news media gone?

## **MEDIA INFLUENCE**

Throughout my interviews, the topic of the news media's role in politics remained a constant point of discussion. I wanted to investigate what role the news media played in the polarization of politics, specifically, what role does the news media play in the legislative process of passing educational laws? My interviewees shared their opinions and knowledge of the influence or lack thereof of the news media's general impact on politics and its specific role in the process of passing or defeating educational legislation. For the remainder of this section "media" will include the printed press, television, radio and electronic press unless otherwise stated.

Dr. Tom Burnham believes media plays a very important role in politics. Burnham believes media has the power to "widen the perspective" of voters and citizens. Burnham talked about how media coverage and purposeful messaging proved vital to the passing of the 1982 Education Reform Act of Mississippi and the manner in which citizens received information around the time of the Education Reform Act of 1982. Burnham stated, "Media was very important in 1982. I actually kept every one of the editorials and opinion pieces of *The Clarion Ledger* then. But this was a time when everyone would read the newspaper. At this point in history, the newspaper and television media was constructing the perspective of the citizens."

Dr. Andrew Mullins, who served on Governor Winter's staff and played a vital role in the passage of the Education Reform Act of 1982, explained the importance of the

media's role in policy making. Mullins still believes the media has the power to enact change like they did in 1982. Mullins wrote in his book *Consensus Building*, "The intense coverage and editorial support from newspapers around the state had a significant impact on the overall process of building awareness of and support for education reform and the accompanying tax increases." *The Clarion Ledger* covered the closed door meetings and put "faces with committee action" and ran numerous daily editorials which challenged legislators. *The Clarion Ledger* was recognized with a Pulitzer Prize for their work during the passage of the Education Reform Act of 1982. However, Mullins believes the media is now focused on other issues. Mullins stated, "There is no hard-lined approach from *The Clarion Ledger* or other newspapers like there was in 1982 for the Education Reform Act. They instead have taken a hardline approach on other issues." For example, Mullins pointed out *The Clarion Ledger* ran a "hardline" special report with a series of articles on campaign finance reform in Mississippi throughout the spring of 2016.

Just as media has the power to help enact legislation, media also has the power to reinforce polarization in our society. Dr. Melody Musgrove believes the partisan media is a driving force in dividing the nation, but the mainstream media is not at fault. Musgrove stated, "The mainstream media is simply reporting what is going on right now in politics, and right now we are seeing an unprecedented level of negativity and a lot partisanship." Musgrove also believes the partisan media does not allow for people to disagree and debate. Instead people watch what they want to hear and never watch anything that challenges their thinking. Musgrove believes very few people try to get the truth anymore and limit themselves to one media outlet.

Musgrove's thoughts are comparable to those of longtime broadcast journalist and former managing editor of ABC's "Nightline" from 1980 to 2005, Ted Koppel. Koppel believes today's media is very different than when he started at ABC in 1975. Koppel worked forty-two years for ABC and saw the evolution of media unfold in front of his eyes. Today, he is an outspoken critic of big media outlets like Fox News and MSNBC. In an opinion piece published in the Washington post, Koppel slammed "partisan" media. Koppel wrote, "Beginning, perhaps, from the reasonable perspective that absolute objectivity is unattainable, Fox News and MSNBC no longer even attempt it. They show us the world not as it is, but as partisans (and loyal viewers) at either end of the political spectrum would like it to be. This is to journalism what Bernie Madoff was to investment: He told his customers what they wanted to hear, and by the time they learned the truth, their money was gone (Washington Post)." Koppel believes we desperately need objectivity in the news today more than ever. However, the advent of news being run as a business rather than a public service has changed that. Koppel believes the American viewer is viewed as a consumer rather than an audience to inform. Koppel states, "The need for clear, objective reporting in a world of rising religious fundamentalism, economic interdependence and global ecological problems is probably greater than it has ever been. But we are no longer a national audience receiving news from a handful of trusted gatekeepers; we're now a million or more clusters of consumers, harvesting information from like-minded providers (Washington Post)."

Koppel believes today's media has hindered Americans' political thinking. In a report on CBS "Sunday Morning", Koppel labeled Fox News host Sean Hannity as perpetrator of polarization of media and citizens. Koppel believed the partisan news

stations have led citizens to ignore conflicting viewpoints. In the interview Hannity asked Koppel if he thought what Hannity reported was bad for America. Koppel responded, “You have attracted people who are determined that ideology is more important than facts (CBS)”.

Dr. Andy Mullins believes the same opinion-forming process applies to the State of Mississippi. Mullins stated, “Today’s media in Mississippi simply reinforces the 60% majority. There is no enlightenment or listening to both sides. They are just merely reinforcing what their listeners already think.” Thus, Mississippi’s media influence is similar to the national influence on politics.

Much like Koppel and Mullins, Dr. Burnham believes Americans are not getting objective news. Burnham believes this lack of objectivity comes down to citizens “widening their perspective”. Burnham believes more and more people today are not “widening their perspective” by reading news. Instead they “watch what they want to watch and read what they want to read.” Burnham believes social media has been another hindrance for people being able to widen their perspective. He believes so many people rely on social media for news when in fact, it is not news. Burnham stated, “Social media is not a bad thing. But, somehow, we have elevated it to a source of news when its intention was to be social. Social media is the primary source of news for a lot of people and it is garbage. Social media is not validated. With newspapers you have a core set of values and ethics that they have to follow. Social media does not have this. Who is validating social media news? Hence, what you read matters.”

Along with Dr. Burnham’s thinking about news today, Pew Research Center and John S. and James L. Knight Foundation have done a number of studies on how

Americans receive their news. On July 14, 2015, Pew Research Center released a study that found more and more Americans are turning to Twitter and Facebook for their news. Pew Research Center conducted a similar study in 2013 and compared the results of the two studies. Based on a survey of 2,035 United States adults, which included 331 Twitter users and 1,315 Facebook users, Pew concluded that 63% of Twitter users and 63% of Facebook users use the respective social media as a news source. In 2013 when Pew conducted a survey of 5,173 US adults, comprised of only Facebook users, they concluded that only 47% of the respondents used Facebook as a news source. This means from 2013 to 2015 we saw a 16% increase in the amount of people that use Facebook as a news source. As for Twitter, the study concluded that, “The proportion of users who say they follow breaking news on Twitter, for example, is nearly twice as high as those who say they do so on Facebook (59% vs. 31%) – lending support, perhaps, to the view that Twitter’s great strength is providing as-it-happens coverage and commentary on live events (Pew Research Center). ” This view was set forth by *New York Times* writer Farhad Manjoo. Manjoo wrote in his June 11, 2015 article about the future and power of Twitter. He believes Twitter has the potential to be the “go to” news source for live news. Manjoo claims, “Among the many uses that Twitter fulfills as a social network, there is one it is uniquely suited for: as a global gathering space for live events. When something goes down in the real world — when a plane crashes, an earthquake strikes, a basketball game gets crazy, or Kanye West hijacks an awards show — Twitter should aim to become the first and only app that people load up to comment on the news (New York Times).”

Another study conducted by Pew Research Center tracked trends in news consumption from 1991 to 2012. From 1991 to 2012, the trends in news consumption changed dramatically with the insertion of internet, social media, online news, and the decline of the newspaper. In 1991, 56% people read the newspaper for their news as opposed to only 29% people reading the newspaper in 2012. In fact, all forms of media fell in percentages of news consumption except for online and mobile news. With the introduction of online news in 2004, 24% of respondents received their news from online sources. In 2012, the percentage of respondents grew 15% to 39% of people receiving their news from online or mobile sources. Television still holds the majority of news consumption, however it did experience a 13% decrease from 68% to 55% from 1991 to 2012. These trends validate Dr. Burnham's assessment of fewer people reading the newspaper and fewer people "widening the perspective" by reading the news from credible sources.

Objective, traditional media sources have been all but replaced by partisan "news" cable television stations and instantaneous social media where everyone with a smartphone is a reporter or pundit. Reaching citizens with credible and objective information will become more difficult, and persuading those who self-identify with a particular party and self-select that party's news sources will be virtually impossible to move.



## CONCLUSION

Mississippi law requires that all children have access to free and adequate public education. Mississippi's public education system, where "roughly 90% of the school age children attend..." (Mullins) mandates the system "teach everyone regardless of socioeconomic background... (Weeks)." Yet, Mississippi's public education system continues to rank near the bottom of recognized, national evaluations of school success (*Quality Counts*).

Mississippi leaders have worked to rectify these rankings through broad, landmark legislative acts. The Mississippi Education Reform Act of 1982 provided mandatory kindergartens, compulsory attendance, improved accreditation standards and increased funding through the use of a sales tax increase. Twenty years later the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP) sought to equalize funding for school districts state-wide by devising a funding formula where overall state funding—not local funding relying on property tax values—would be prioritized to eliminate the disparities between property-value-poor districts and property value-rich-districts. The formula has been funded from overall state revenues only twice in fifteen years.

Mississippi's educational leaders have innovated within the public education system. Implementation and amendment of the federally-mandated Mattie T. Consent Decree helped improve education for special education students with disabilities. Statewide teacher health insurance coverage helped retain and attract quality teachers,

serving as an added benefit to compensation packages. Emphasis on recruiting highly-trained teachers continues. Changing the culture of schools and the communities which comprise them to recognize the utmost importance of quality public schools continues as well.

These efforts have been successfully enacted and implemented through longstanding political processes and strategies. These strategies include persuasion, procedural and modification tactics. Yet with the citizen-led, 2015 Initiative 42 constitutional amendment, these strategies did not seem to be working. Initiative 42 sought to require the annual funding of MAEP by mandate of the State Constitution. The Legislature and scant few executive branch leaders had followed the mandates of the statute to prioritize budgeting for the program, and the constitutional amendment became the last hope to force this funding priority. Initiative 42 failed, partly because of the procedural strategy of its opponents placing a counter-initiative on the ballot. The political dialogue on the vote for Initiative 42 became rancorous and divisive, an us against them, winner take all contest. In addition to the counter-initiative, 42's opponents convinced a majority of the state's voters with the illogical argument that it would redistribute local property tax revenues to poorer districts and local school districts would lose control.

New political process dynamics were at work. Political partisanship had arrived in Mississippi in the mid-2000s, and by 2015, the state had evolved into a one-party-dominated legislature and executive. Aided by gerrymandering after the 2010 Census, the one-party-controlled government began to decide issues on a partisan basis regardless of the simplicity of the issue.

New means of reaching the public had emerged. Partisan national and state media outlets reached a public lacking discernment, placing voters into the polarized and partisan camps. The rise of social media served to flood the public with unreliable and often misleading information.

The strategies of persuasion, procedural and modification formerly used by advocates of public education to enact legislation had been co-opted by the partisan-only majority and perpetuated by new means of propagandizing the electorate. Nonetheless, the problems with Mississippi's public education system remain.

So what is an educator to do? How do they make sense of this and stay motivated? First, educators must be informed on the process and educational issues. I believe my paper takes a crucial first step in helping inform the education profession. Now, I do not believe this is a fully comprehensive covering of educational issues and legislation in Mississippi. Thus, educators must stay informed of the issues pertaining to education in Mississippi. Once educators are well informed on the issues, educators can start to apply pressures to affect change with their legislators. Educational legislation directly affects teachers, thus their voices must be heard on the front end of legislation. We as educators must insert our voice into this complex conversation of educational legislation. But before we can run; we must walk. This paper begins the walk.

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- This is an overview of the entire process of initiative 42. The website discusses proponents and opposition to Initiative 42. This website is comprehensive and a good tool to review the events of 42. It also has the ballot on the website.

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- This report gives a state-by-state grade of education with Mississippi receiving a D and ranking 50<sup>th</sup> overall. The study measures educational success by three categories chance for success, K-12 Achievement, and school finance. Mississippi ranks 49<sup>th</sup> or C- for chance for success, D- or 51<sup>st</sup> for K-12 achievement, and D+ or 40<sup>th</sup> for school finance.

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- This book was the basis for my analysis of passing legislation. I focused on chapter 5 of the book which focused on strategies to pass legislation. Arnold had three different types of strategies, persuasion, procedural, and modification. Persuasion strategies included category shifts, arguments of equity, and appealing to public opinion. Procedural strategies included any procedural changes to the process such as closed voting or special sessions. Modification included changing the benefits, making costs less clear, spreading benefits, and buying off opponents with benefits.

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- This article talks of the alternative being the first time ever introduced and the complicated initiative law. One legislator says money is not the answer but schools cannot operate or succeed without funding. Others believe it is how you spend the money and wasteful spending would occur. We see a party divide on the issue.

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Barksdale, Jim. "Support Initiative 42, Ignore Scare Tactics: Column." *The Clarion Ledger*. The Clarion Ledger, 25 July 2015. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.

- Jim Barksdale wrote this article in response to opponents against 42. He attacks the two main arguments against Initiative 42. The first he attacks is that Initiative 42 would require an immediate tax increase. This is not true as it is a phase in plan and only 25% of economic growth, so if there is no growth there is no increased funding. Also he attacks the main issues of a judge having power to dictate funding. He states that the system already allows for judicial review for any legislative action and as for the Hinds County argument the judge can be from anywhere. Also any lawsuit under initiative 42 would inevitably end up at the Mississippi Supreme Court, a state elected body.

Barthel, Michael, Elisa Shearer, Jeffrey Gottfried, and Amy Mitchell. "The Evolving Role of News on Twitter and Facebook." *Pew Research Center's Journalism Project*. Pew Research Center, 14 July 2015. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

- This study provided important information on the role of Twitter and Facebook into today's society. This study showed a higher number of people than ever before are getting their news from social media websites such as Twitter and Facebook. This is very interesting because of a lack of fact checking and the rules upheld by the press.

Callen, Grant. "Empower Mississippi." *Empower Mississippi*. Empower Mississippi, 18 Jan. 2015. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.

- Grant writes that the fine print of Initiative 42 is problematic. He writes the control of schools would be taken away from legislators and given to a judge. This judge would determine the funding of local districts and potentially other issues. He then discusses 42A and offers support for the alternative. He believes the alternative leaves the issue of funding in the hands of voters, focuses on

effectiveness, and money is not the solution with education. This article is slanted towards 42A.

Clark, Tish. "Mississippi Voters To Vote On Two School Funding Amendments." *LOCALMEMPHIS*. N.p., 20 Jan. 2015. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.

- This article highlights the issue of what Mississippians will be voting on with initiative 42 and 42 alternative. It brings in quotes from Desoto County Schools business manager stating, "We fight every year for just the funding we deserve," and "The alternate does not support funding education on an adequate level when there is a growth in the economy. So it's exactly like it is now."

Comans, James. "Mississippi Parents: Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is." *Comansense*. N.p., 06 Feb. 2015. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.

- Comans, a Mississippi educator, talks of how being a teacher in Mississippi is not ideal. He says state leaders are the problem with education. He states how Mississippi underfunds education and teachers are doing the best they can with the limited resources provided. He urges readers not to attack the teachers because the teachers are not the problem. Finally, he urges the public to "put their money where their mouth is" and "demand that your government fully funds public schools, then let the professional educators be the education professionals, NOT the politicians who seek to divide us for profit."

Comans, James. "Ritchie Knows the Facts, But Not the Reality." *Comansense*. N.p., 26 Apr. 2015. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.

- This article is an opinion piece by James Comans in response to an article written by Spencer Ritchie, Mississippi GOP executive director. Ritchie wrote that Republicans favor education and have funded more than ever before. Comans concedes to that fact but the reality of public schools is a different story. He lists a few examples of the impact that lack of funding for public education has had on schools. He also attacks Ritchie's pride in Condoleezza Rice's quote by stating statistics about our education system.

Coz, Emily Le. "Private Prison In Mississippi Allegedly Put Inmates In 'Barbaric' Conditions." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 31 May 2013. Web. 15 Apr. 2017. <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/31/private-prison-mississippi-barbaric-conditions-\\_n\\_3362596.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/31/private-prison-mississippi-barbaric-conditions-_n_3362596.html)>.

- This article describes the "barbaric conditions" of the East Mississippi Correctional Facility. This prison was under private prison contractors and allegations of abuse and neglect were rampant. The conditions cited in this article are horrific. This is an example of a failure of privatization in Mississippi.

Crawford, Bill. "BILL CRAWFORD - Initiative 42 May Be a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing - Mississippi Business Journal." *Mississippi Business Journal*. Mississippi Business Journal, 23 Aug. 2015. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.

- Bill Crawford argues that initiative 42 is not arguing for fully funding but rather an “adequate and efficient” education. He argues of the lack of clarity on what an adequate and efficient system is. Also he argues that this initiative takes the control of schools from elected representatives to a judge. Finally, he says the initiative could allow judges to force pre-kindergarten on schools and there is no stopping what could happen.

Crouch, David. "Highly Trained, Respected and Free: Why Finland's Teachers Are Different." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 17 June 2015. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

- This article discusses how the country of Finland’s teachers are trained and viewed. Teachers in Finland are highly regarded and highly trained. Becoming a teacher in Finland is a highly competitive profession where only 7% of applicants are accepted into teacher colleges.

Dawood, Yasmin A. "Reconsidering the Rule of Law: Reflections on Power, Politics, and Partisan Gerrymandering." *Good Society Journal*, vol. 13, no. 3, Dec. 2004, pp. 31-35. EBSCOhost

- This is a study discussing the hazards of gerrymandering districts. Dawood discusses how Pennsylvania gerrymandered their districts to have “safe seats” and belittle the opposition. Dawood does not believe this is conducive to a proper democracy.

Dreher, Arielle, and Imani Khayyam. "The Demise of Initiative 42." *The Demise of Initiative 42 / Jackson Free Press / Jackson, MS*. Jackson Free Press, 11 Nov. 2015. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

<<http://www.jacksonfreepress.com/news/2015/nov/11/demise-initiative-42/>>.

- Dreher and Khayyam talks of how Initiative 42 did not pass. They talk of the introduction of the alternative and the impact it had on the confusion of the ballot. The two authors also talk about the rhetoric and campaign against Initiative 42. This article discusses the demise and the impact of the failure of passing Initiative 42.

Evans, Lynn. "Evans: Education, Economic Development Go Hand in Hand." *The Clarion Ledger*. The Clarion Ledger, 26 July 2015. Web. 20 Mar. 2016.

- Evans discusses two studies, 2015 Kids Count and the 2015 Manufacturing and Logistics Report Card. She highlights results such as, “The most damning finding for Mississippi in the 2015 Kids Count report is our highest in the nation child poverty rate of one in three Mississippi children living in poverty” and “The 2015

Manufacturing and Logistics Report Card released by Ball State Indiana gives Mississippi average to poor grades in nine categories, with two exceptions. The state gets an A in sector diversification and an F in human capital.” She urges Mississippi to break the cycle of poverty and invest in “what we call our greatest resource...our children”.

Filipovic, Jill. "America's Private Prison System Is a National Disgrace." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 13 June 2013. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

- Jill Filipovic describes Mississippi’s failures in the private prison system. She highlights the horrific accusations of the East Mississippi Correctional Facility. Filipovic believes privatization of prisons is bad for America. She writes of how these private contractors are making money at the expense of taxpayers and vulnerable members of society.

Garrett, Charles. "CHARLES GARRETT: Culture Defines How Good a School Is - Daily Journal." *Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal*. Journal, Inc., 18 Aug. 2015. Web. 15 Feb. 2016.

- This is an editorial piece by Charles Garrett. Garret believes the culture of the school determines school success and not money. Thus, he believes we need a culture change of schools rather than more funding. Funding is not the answer.

Gillon, Steven M. *The Pact: Bill Clinton, Newt Gingrich, and the Rivalry that Defined a Generation*. Oxford University Press, Oxford; New York; 2008.

- This book highlights the intriguing relationship between Bill Clinton and Newt Gingrich over the late 1990s. This book was primarily used to gather information on the rhetoric used by Newt Gingrich and thoughts on *Contract for America*.

Gleason, Patrick. "Scheme to Take Education Funding Authority From Legislators Spells Trouble For Mississippi Taxpayers." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 4 Aug. 2015. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.

- Patrick Gleason writes of how Initiative 42 shifts the power away from legislators and Mississippians to a single judge in Hinds County. Gleason talks of how “free-reign” by a judge could have consequences for future businesses wanting to come to Mississippi. He portrays Initiative 42 as liberal and Democrat favored issue and highlights the funding for the campaign to be mostly by liberals. He believes passing of initiative 42 could lead to “funding cuts for priorities—like public safety, transportation, and healthcare”.

Hemlick, Joyce. "Helmick: Mississippi Educators Support Initiative 42." *Clarionledger.com*. The Clarion Ledger, 20 Aug. 2015. Web. 26 Feb. 2016. <<http://www.clarionledger.com/story/opinion/2015/08/20/helmick-Mississippi-educators-support->



initiative/32047075/http://www.clarionledger.com/story/opinion/2015/08/20/helmick-Mississippi-educators-support-initiative/32047075/>.

- An editorial by a former Mississippi educator. She wrote that educators support the initiative and described what all the funding would provide. She stated that initiative 42-a is a decoy but a decoy does not work. She challenges the status quo and states that the state has shortchanged schools by 1.7 billion dollars. Thus local municipalities have had to close the gap and raised local property taxes to around \$85 million.

Hoseman, C. Delbert. "2015 General Election." <i>2015 General Election</i>.

Mississippi Secretary of State, 3 Dec. 2015. Web. 21 Feb. 2016.

- The official election results for Initiative 42.

Isaac, Katherine, and Ralph Nader. *Ralph Nader Presents Practicing Democracy: A Guide to Student Action*. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1995.

- This book offers a quick how-to guide of trying to get legislation brought up or passed. Isaac and Nader offers a number of strategies to enact political change including studies, reports, use of interest groups, picketing, etc. This book will be helpful in the passing legislation station even though it gives a quick view and limited strategies of legislative action.

Jacobson, Gary C. "Polarized Politics and the 2004 Congressional and Presidential Elections." *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 120, no. 2, 2005, pp. 199–218., [www.jstor.org/stable/20202515](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20202515).

- This journal article provides a claim that polarization has been a gradual progression than a quick succession. Jacobson also investigates the 2004 Congressional and Presidential elections as he states that were the most polarized in US history. Jacobson provides multiple charts and graphs that talk of the evolution of polarization since the presidency of Eisenhower.

Kaplan, Leslie S. *Culture Re-Boot: Reinvigorating School Culture to Improve Student Outcomes*. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, Calif, 2013.

- Kaplan focuses on the importance of culture in schools and school districts. Kaplan believes a lot of the great reforms of the past 40 years have been ineffective because schools have not focused on changing the culture. Thus, Kaplan believes schools must perform a culture re-boot to change the culture and implement critical change. This process is not easy and requires diligence on every member of the school This source is also important because Tom Burnham mentioned the importance of culture in his interview.

Koppel, Ted. "Ted Koppel: Olbermann, O'Reilly and the Death of Real News." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, 14 Nov. 2010. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

- Ted Koppel is a staunch opponent of today's news that is focused on profit rather than being a public good. Being a part of the news for 30 years, Koppel gives an interesting insight of how news has evolved over time. He is very critical of partisan media that does not provide the truth, giving facts without fear or favor.

Latino, Russ. "Latino: Initiative 42 Means Less Freedom for Parents." *The Clarion Ledger*. The Clarion Ledger, 8 Aug. 2015. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.

<<http://www.clarionledger.com/story/opinion/columnists/2015/08/08/latino-initiative-means-less-freedom-parents/31353121/>>.

- This is an editorial piece advocated Mississippians vote against Initiative 42. Latino writes this is a power grab from outsiders. He highlights the wording of the document is misleading and gives all the power to a judge in Jackson. He also states this judge's power does not stop at just funding but could also determine standards and distribution of local power because of lack of wording into new proposed law. He puts previous and proposed legislation wording together. He does propose we should help education but Initiative 42 is not the answer.

Le Coz, Emily, and Geoff Pender. "'Legislature' Files to Dismiss Ed Initiative Challenge." *The Clarion Ledger*. The Clarion Ledger, 31 Mar. 2015. Web. 29 Feb. 2016. <<http://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2015/03/30/legislature-files-dismiss-initiative-challenge/70691198/>>.

- The legislature filed and asked a Hinds County judge to dismiss Adrian Shipman's lawsuit against 42-A, but a number of legislators oppose this because it was not voted on. A lot of Democrats voiced their opposition to this lawsuit saying it did not represent their views. Shipman filed the lawsuit because it would affect the electorate and the alternative is not the legislative's intent. The rest of the article talks of the underfunding of MAEP since 2008.

Le Coz, Emily. "Miss. Supreme Court Hears from Both Sides of Initiative 42." *The Clarion Ledger*. The Clarion Ledger, 9 June 2015. Web. 03 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2015/06/09/supreme-court-hears-both-sides-initiative-42/28744073/>>.

- The debate over the title of the Initiative 42-A was appealed to the Mississippi Supreme Court even though Hinds country circuit court judge erred that the name be changed. Proponents of 42 argued that the circuit court judge's decision should have been final and an appeal to the Mississippi Supreme Court should not have been made. The decision has not been made but the only thing that could change is the title of 42-A regardless of decision they both will be on ballot.

Marsaw, Jacqueline. "Mississippi's Best Community Newspaper." *Initiative 42 Training Set for Tonight*. N.p., 13 Aug. 2015. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.

- This article provides a practical use of the shortfall of the money being funded by the state. “The result is a \$1.67 billion statewide shortfall since FY2009 — enough money to pay for 4,871 first grader teachers for 10 years or 16.7 million textbooks or 4,555 school counselors for 10 years or 5.6 million classroom computers or 17,634 school buses” (Marsaw). “You should always remember that every child in Mississippi has a fundamental right to a free and adequate public education. That means well-trained and well paid teachers, safe and roadworthy school buses, enough new textbooks for every student to take home, school counselors, computers and basic school supplies, classrooms that don’t leak when it rains”. This article urges voters to vote for initiative 42.

McCandless, David. "The Beauty of Data Visualization." *David McCandless: The Beauty of Data Visualization / TED Talk / TED.com*. TED Conferences, LLC, July 2010. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

- McCandless talks of the importance to take all of the numbers of data and to have organized into a visual representation. Data visualization is this process of organizing data into easily accessible “road maps” as he calls them. Data visualization is important in trying to pass legislation. It is important to be clear and concise with data, thus data visualization allows for this success.

MDOC. "Mississippi Department of Corrections." *Private Prisons*. MDOC, n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

- The MDOC website writes of the five prisons that were privatized in Mississippi. Two of the five have been closed recently. This website gives a brief description of each private prison such as when it was accredited, opened, and programs offered.

Miller, Carolyn, Lee Rainie, Kristen Purcell, Amy Mitchell, and Tom Rosenstiel. "How People Get Local News and Information in Different Communities." *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*. Pew Research Center, 25 Sept. 2012. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

- This extensive study done by Pew Research Center analyzes how people get their local news. They break down people into urban, suburban, small town, and rural residents. The study concluded that residents have high levels of general interest in news. However, the sources each relied on were different. Urban people relied more on a combination of online and traditional sources, while rural and small town residents relied more on their local news such as local newspapers and broadcast television.

Mitchell, Amy, Jocelyn Kiley, Jeffrey Gottfried, and Emily Guskin. "The Role of News on Facebook." *Pew Research Center's Journalism Project*. Pew Research Center, 24 Oct. 2013. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

- This study focused on the role of news on Facebook in today's society. Pew conducted a survey comprised of 5,173 respondents. The results showed 64% of U.S. adults use Facebook while 30% of U.S. adults consume news on Facebook. Of these 30%, only 22% believe Facebook is a useful way to get news. Hence the study shows a rise in the use of Facebook for news but limits the overall influence.

Morgan, David. "Hannity to Koppel: "Do You Think I'm Bad for America?"" *CBS News*. CBS Interactive, 26 Mar. 2017. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

- In this interview, Sean Hannity and Ted Koppel exchange words on media of today. Koppel believes news stations like Sean Hannity is bad for America. Koppel believes Hannity attracts people "who are determined that ideology is more important than facts."

Mullins, Andrew P. *Building Consensus: A History of the Passage of the Mississippi Education Reform Act of 1982*. Mississippi: A.P. Mullins, 1992. Print.

- Dr. Andy Mullins details consensus building in passing the Education Reform Act of 1982. He discusses the three year project which eventually led to compulsory education, public kindergarten, a teacher pay raise, and other education reforms. The legislation was hailed as one of the greatest pieces of legislation to come out of Mississippi.

Mullins, Andrew P., Christian Wilkens, Soria Colomer, Julie Coris, Rachel DeTemple, Carol Hughes, Kathryn Murchison, Tammy Pelli, and Cinde Rudder. "History of Education in the Mississippi Delta." *Delta Autumn: A Guide for First Year Teachers in the Mississippi Delta*. N.p.: Mississippi Teacher Corps, n.d. N. page. Print.

- This chapter includes a brief history of the education in Mississippi. The chapter covers education prior to civil rights movement, after civil rights movement, the passing of the education reform act, and the state of education up until 1992.

Munford, Luthern. "Munford: What Initiative 42 Does, Doesn't Mean." *The Clarion Ledger*. N.p., 25 Apr. 2015. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

- Luther Munford, an attorney in Jackson, Mississippi, writes an editorial in support Circuit Court Judge Kidd's ruling of the naming of 42-A. He believes that 42-A was an act of deception by opponents of 42. He also argues both 42 and 42-A would allow for a court to hold the legislature accountable. Proponents of 42-A argue 42 puts the decision in a "hinds county" judges hands. He points out the only difference is the wording of the laws. 42 aims to establish "adequate and efficient" education while 42-A aims to establish effective education. Munford states there is no definition of "effective" but a formal definition does exist for "adequate and efficient".

Nash, Jere, and Taggart, Andy. *Mississippi Politics: The Struggle for Power, 1976-2008* (2). Jackson, US: University Press of Mississippi, 2009. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 14 April 2017.

- This journal article discusses Mississippi politics from 1976 to 2008. Nash and Taggart discuss how politics evolved over time. The main focus of this journal article for my purposes was the Hailey Barbour years. The author discusses of Barbour's skill and craft of politics. They also discuss of how Barbour brought in his craft of politics to create a powerful republican party and more partisan state.

O'Reilly, Bill. "Ted Koppel on the Worthiness of Cable News." *Fox News*. FOX News Network, 20 Sept. 2012. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

- Bill O'Reilly and Ted Koppel discuss cable news of today. The two reporters discuss the likes of partisan media such as Fox News and MSNBC. Koppel goes on to say that ideological coverage of the news is bad for America and hurt the ability to compromise. Koppel also believes news has shifted to a business rather than a calling. O'Reilly argues that they are not biased and that bias has existed throughout the history of news.

Pender, Geoff. "House Puts Halt to 'Third Grade Reading Gate'" *The Clarion Ledger*. The Clarion Ledger, 11 Feb. 2015. Web. 21 Feb. 2016.

- This article is the where the infamous Phil Bryant quote of calling Mississippi's public education system an abysmal failure. This article was in response to third grade reading gate not being fully implemented.

Rauch, Jonathan. "How American Politics Went Insane." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, 25 July 2016. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

- Rauch puts together a thorough article of how American politics have shifted to chaos. Rauch believes the chaos we have seen in the election and recent years is the fault of reforms over the last 40 years. Rauch believes the loss of the "middlemen" such as coalition leaders, political machines, etc. as the reason for lack of compromise. He also believes the increased transparency has been a detriment to hard discussions and compromise. All in all, Rauch gives explanations of why our government is the way it is today.

Rose, Caleb P., Robert Maranto, and Gary W. Ritter. "From the Delta Banks to the Upper Ranks: An Evaluation of KIPP Charter Schools in Rural Arkansas." *Educational Policy* 31 (2017): 180-201. SAGE. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

- This study takes an investigative look into KIPP schools of Helena, Arkansas. This study aimed to address critics concerns that KIPP success is due to prior academic skills of student and high attrition rates. The study concluded that KIPP schools are outperforming traditional public schools with similar backgrounds of

students. The study also concluded that attrition rates are very similar to traditional public schools.

Royals, Kate. "Education Funding Initiative Hearings Kick off in Jackson." *The Clarion Ledger*. N.p., 12 Aug. 2015. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.

- This article talks of the first “consensus building” in initiative 42 hearings. The hearing had proponents and advocates giving their sides of Initiative 42. Many of the people at the forum seemed to be in support. Main argument against is that the power check of circuit court judge. “This is a people’s movement” and told we could not fund when we almost did a tax cut- quotes.

Royals, Kate. "Initiative 42 Supporters: Secretary of State Brochure Misleading." *The Clarion Ledger*. The Clarion Ledger, 13 Aug. 2015. Web. 29 Feb. 2016. <<http://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2015/08/13/initiative-42-secretary--state-pamphlet/31650823/>>.

- The Legislative Budget Office released what affect Initiative 42 would have on the state budget. Supporters argued the analysis was misleading and does not factor in the seven year phase-in period for Initiative 42. The central argument surrounds that “funding is shifted to court system” wording.

Royals, Kate. "Mississippi Supreme Court Upholds AG's Language on Education Alternative." *The Clarion Ledger*. The Clarion Ledger, 13 Aug. 2015. Web. 03 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2015/08/13/supreme-court-initiative-42-alternative/31646219/>>.

- The Supreme Court of Mississippi ruled on August 13, 2015 that Circuit Court Judge Winston Kidd did not have the authority to rewrite the title for 42-A. The law did not allow for an appeal of a ballot title drafted by the Attorney General.

Salter, Sid. "MAEP Battle and the Ballot." *The Clarion Ledger*. The Clarion Ledger, 15 Aug. 2015. Web. 18 Mar. 2016.

- Sid Salter discusses what the choices are of the voters of Mississippi regarding initiative 42 and 42A. He focuses on how initiative 42 does not have in writing a phase-in plan and how the discretionary power of funding schools would be controlled by chancery judges. He does point out “that current state government leaders and the Legislature provided the largest amount of funding for K-12 education in state history during the most recent legislative session”.

Salter, Sid. "Salter: Judge Adds to Alternative Initiative 42 Debate." *The Clarion Ledger*. The Clarion Ledger, 8 Apr. 2015. Web. 3 Mar. 2016.

- This article discusses how Kidd overruled the Attorney General’s wording of initiative 42. He talks of how opponents of Initiative 42 feared that one judge would decide where funding goes and could rule against the majority. Salter

believes Kidd's actions prove their fears and his decision went against the majority of Mississippi's legislators. Thus Kidd's decision gave opponents argument a leg to stand on.

Shipman, Adrian. "The Kids Are the Losers If Mississippi's Initiative 42 Does Not Pass - The Hechinger Report." *The Hechinger Report*. Teachers College at Columbia University, 06 Aug. 2015. Web. 22 Feb. 2016.

- One of the leaders in the Initiative 42 campaign, Adrian Shipman writes an editorial urging Mississippians to get out and support Initiative 42. She talks of Mississippi legislators feelings on education and how the lack of funding has affected schools.

The Clarion Ledger. "MAEP Initiative Hearings Scheduled." *The Clarion Ledger*. The Clarion Ledger, 19 May 2015. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.

<<http://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2015/05/19/maep-initiative-hearings-scheduled/27574017/>>.

- Eight hearings were scheduled all across the magnolia state to let voters "have a voice in this process". These hearings were held in Jackson, Hernando, Tupelo, Meridian, Cleveland, Hattiesburg, Biloxi, and Brookhaven. These locations were selected to allow for as many voters to attend as possible in geographically proportionate areas.

West, Ryan. "Between the Lines Redistricting Louisiana." *Scribd*. Scribd, 23 Mar. 2011. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

- This study discusses the gerrymandering and redistricting of Louisiana. This study was primarily cited for the quote by Les Francis. Francis discusses that gerrymandering has caused the shift in today's politics. Francis cites the polarization and "poisonous" atmosphere is primarily due to gerrymandering and redistricting.

Williams, Timothy. "Privately Run Mississippi Prison, Called a Scene of Horror, Is Shut Down." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 15 Sept. 2016. Web. 15 Apr. 2017. <[https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/16/us/Mississippi-closes-private-prison-walnut-grove.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/16/us/Mississippi-closes-private-prison-walnut-grove.html?_r=0)>.

- This *New York Times* article by Timothy Williams describes the closure and horrific allegations of abuse and neglect at Walnut Grove Correctional Facility. Prison rights activists hailed the closure of Walnut Grove Correctional facility. The article also cited Judge Carlton Reeves report of how he viewed the prison.

Wilson, Steve. "Out-of-state Money Floods into Fight over Mississippi Education Funding - Watchdog.org." *Watchdog.org RSS*. N.p., 24 Aug. 2015. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.

- This article shows that a lot of money from out of state foundations and programs. The two main contributors are Washington DC based New Venture Fund and the Atlanta-based Southern Education Foundation. They have both given more than \$2.5 dollars to 42 for Better Schools.



## **APPENDIX**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Talk about your role with educational policy.
2. Could you describe an experience with educational policy that stood out to you?
3. Can you tell me about an educational policy decision or initiative of which you are most proud?
4. Can you describe easy or how hard it is to get political officials interested educational issues?
5. From your perspective why is education an important consideration for public officials?
6. How do policy makers learn about educational initiatives?
7. What are some of the changes in the public policy process you have noticed in your career or time of service?
8. Can you describe the process a bill takes to garner support in the legislature?
9. Have you ever sponsored education legislation?
  - a. If so what was this legislation? Did this legislation pass?
  - b. How did it pass or how did it not pass?
10. Considering Initiative 42 it seemed the sentiment was polarized or controversial. In today's political climate some bills seem very controversial or polarizing, can you explain why that is and if so how it happens?

11. How much should citizens know about the legislative process or a particular policy?
  - a. What is appropriate to share with the public?
12. How transparent should a legislator be?
13. What is the role of the press in the legislative process?
  - a. Printed press or electronic press?
14. What is the role of the media in the legislative process?
15. Do social media have a role in the legislative process?
  - a. To what extent and how do you use social media to provide information about legislation or decision to citizens?

## **INTERVIEW LETTER**

From: Ben Logan

1078 Cr. 194

Blue Springs, MS 38828

[bclogan@go.olemiss.edu](mailto:bclogan@go.olemiss.edu)

Dear:

My name is Ben Logan. I am a senior public policy leadership and secondary mathematics major at the University of Mississippi. I am currently working on my senior thesis for the Sally McDonnell Barksdale College Honors College which is entitled “Educational Legislation in a Polarized Political Climate” under the supervision of Dr. Amy Wells Dolan, Associate Professor of Higher Education and Associate Dean of School of Education at the University of Mississippi. The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the political process related to educational legislation and initiatives. Through your interview, I hope to gain further knowledge of how educational legislation becomes politicized, how education legislation is passed, and the overall political process of educational legislation. As a future educator and an advocate for education, I feel the need for a better understanding of the political process surrounding education initiatives and bills. I am reaching out to you because you either possess or have possessed a role in the political process surrounding educational legislation. I feel your experience can greatly help me in examining the politics of education.

Because of your experience, I would like to invite you to participate in this qualitative case study. If you agree to participate, you will be asked for an interview which will last anywhere from an hour to two hours. The interview will not be audio taped or recorded. I will take notes on my computer throughout the interview to accurately reflect what is discussed. This study has been reviewed by The University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study fulfills the human research subject protections obligations required by state and federal law and University policies. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact the IRB at (662) 915-7482.

During our meeting for the interview, the questions I plan to include are: 1) your personal experiences in the legislative process of educational legislation, 2) the perspectives of the legislative process, and 3) transparency of the legislative process. I appreciate you for your time and consideration for participating in this qualitative case study. I believe your participation can provide great insight of the political process in the Mississippi legislature surrounding education. If you have any comments or suggestions, please do not hesitate to reach me at (662)397-5657 or email me at [bclogan@go.olemiss.edu](mailto:bclogan@go.olemiss.edu). You may also contact my thesis advisor Dr. Amy Wells Dolan at (662)915-5710.

Sincerely,

Ben Logan

## **INFORMATION SHEET AND RELEASE FORM**

### **Information About a Qualitative Research Study**

**Title:** Educational Legislation in a Polarized Political Climate

#### **Investigator**

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#### **Description/Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the political process related to educational legislation and initiatives. To learn more about the legislative process surrounding educational legislation, I will conduct document analysis, extensive literature review, and interpersonal interviews.

#### **Procedures**

Each subject will undergo an interview which consists of the principal investigator asking questions about the political process surrounding education legislation. I will utilize semi-

structured questions that allows for consistency across interviews and also flexibility to probe for deeper answers when appropriate. The duration of each interview is approximately 60 minutes. The questions will cover three categories. The three categories of questions are 1) your personal experiences in the legislative process of educational legislation, 2) the perspectives of the legislative process, and 3) transparency of the legislative process.

### **Cost and Payments**

The interview will take approximately one hour. Otherwise, there is no cost associated with this interview for the participant.

### **Right to Withdraw and Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. If you would like to terminate your participation in this study, you may do so at any time without penalty. You may notify me of your decision in person, via email at [bclogan@go.olemiss.edu](mailto:bclogan@go.olemiss.edu) or by phone at 662-397-5657.

### **IRB Approval**

This study has been reviewed by the University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study fulfills the human research subject protections obligations required by state and federal law and University policies. If you have any questions concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact the IRB at 662-915-7842.

### **Question**

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me, Ben Logan, at 662-397-5657 or my advisor, Dr. Amy Wells Dolan, at 662-915-5710.

**Statement of Consent**

I have read and understand the above information. By completing the survey/interview I consent to participate in the study.